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ABSTRACT

The teaching activities presented in this pamphlet focus on storytelling. Beginning with a discussion of the purpose and rules of storytelling, it contains suggestions for selecting stories, lists story suggestions for various ages, and includes a brief annotated bibliography of recommended story collections. It explains learning and telling a story as well as how to use picture books. In addition, the pamphlet discusses aids to storytelling, including string stories and puppets, and concludes by explaining how to tell stories from one's life and by listing the address needed to contact storytelling guilds. References include a short list of books and conference proceedings about storytelling. (EL)

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Primary English Notes ... from the Primary English Teaching Association

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The oral tradition has always been important in all cultures and civilisations. Folk tales have been called "the cement of society". In recent years, however, storytelling has almost become a lost art. As a result, countless children have been deprived of an astonishingly rich, valuable, enjoyable and ever-renewable heritage, not only of their own culture but those of others. Lately there has been a welcome revival of interest in storytelling.

This P.E.N., written by a leading Australian teacher/storyteller, tells teachers and parents all they need to know about the art and practice of Storytelling.

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STORY TELLING

A GUIDE TO THE ART

Learning to listen, the painless way.

STORYTELLING

The sharing of stories is one of the most important and rewarding things teachers and parents can do in the classroom and at home. These moments can be precious to children. In fact, they may even be the *only* thing a child remembers about particular teachers in later life:

"I was lucky. I had this teacher who told us stories."

"It was Mrs M. who read to us. I don't remember her teaching us anything but I can remember those stories better than any lesson we ever had."

"Old Bogey introduced me to stories. I wish I had told him how much they meant to me."

Make sure you share stories with children. Why pass up such an opportunity for fame and immortality? Besides, storytelling is such good fun!

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STORYTELLING

STORYTELLING IN THE CLASSROOM

Storytelling is the teacher's best friend and most basic tool. It requires only those skills that any good teacher develops — skills in how to select, shape and present material in ways that will interest, involve and extend children — together with an awareness of group and individual responses and a flexible use of any suitable opportunity.

You do *not* have to be a "performer". Performers often "come between" a story and their listeners. They may fascinate and involve us but they usually leave us in the position of watchers/listeners/admirers rather than thinking, "I could do that if I tried", or "Why, that's something we all do in some way".

Performers often spend hours preparing material, while the busy teacher can use yarns, folk tales, myths and legends that require little preparation, with an occasional longer or more complicated story to extend one's skills. A short yarn or local legend can illustrate something in a lesson or offer a welcome break in routines.

Storytelling uses *memory skills* — but all teachers need those. How often do you show that you *have* a memory that can retain and recall pleasurable experiences? Or do you only use this faculty to remind students of things *they* would gladly forget?

LISTENING

A good storyteller is a good listener; someone who enjoys *hearing* stories as much as *telling* them. A good storyteller listens to all people everywhere and is aware of how voice inflections can convey emotional overtones which are often at variance with the words.

Learn to listen to all the hidden meanings in the spoken words of your classroom and community. Use your increased awareness to enhance not only your storytelling skills but all your teaching and your daily contact with others.

WHY TELL STORIES?

- It is a way of *sharing pleasure* through story, words, people and events.
- Storytelling develops a *relaxed relationship* between your class (and individual children) and yourself.
- *All children* enjoy stories — the intelligent and the not-so-bright; the good ones and the "problem" ones; the literate and illiterate; the passive child and the active. Even the "hyperactive" can be held entranced by a good story.
- Storytelling can be used to introduce children to a *range of story experiences,* old and new.
- *It provides children with models* of story patterns, themes, characters, incidents that can help them in their own writing, oral language, thinking etc.
- It helps to *develop imagination* and arouse children's sympathy for and understanding of others.
- It can be used to nurture and encourage a *sense of humour* in children.
- It can help to *put children's own worlds into perspective* and suggest alternative ways for "storying" their own lives.
- It can *increase knowledge* and understanding of other countries, other races, other beliefs.
- It can be used to *introduce new ideas* and to question established concepts without threat to the individual.
- It can lead to *discussions* that are far-ranging and often more involving and more satisfying than those arising from formal lessons.
- It is the most painless way of teaching children to *listen,* to concentrate, to follow the thread and logic of an argument — all skills needed in Learning and Life.

WHY TELL RATHER THAN READ?

Telling is a more direct, personal and immediate form of communication: "The teller is free; the reader is bound". You can *see* all your group; can know if they are with you; can gauge their response.

RULES FOR THE STORYTELLER

1. Like your story. This is *the* most important rule. If you don't particularly like your story you are wasting your time learning it, and should not be planning to share it. Our likes and dislikes come through to children implicitly.

- The stories you like can be lived with down through the years, told and retold hundreds of times. They never grow stale but seem to develop and strengthen as you come to know them better through the responses of your listeners.
- In the beginning you will make mistakes and sometimes select stories that prove unsatisfactory for you and/or your listeners. Drop them as soon as possible.

2. Know your story. Know it so well that you can create it anew each time without any panic or uncertainty. Folk tales, myths and legends do not have to be known word for word but if there is a good version you should stick to it closely. Any repetition of rhymes and phrases should be exploited. They help to give shape to the story and allow the children to recognise some of the patterns. Encourage them to join in with such things as Wanda Gag's:

Cats here, cats there
Cats and kittens everywhere,
Hundreds of cats,
Thousands of cats,
Millions and billions and trillions of cats.

Even older students will gleefully chant along if there are suitable opportunities in stories for them.

- If you are using stories where the wording *is* important, then learn them word for word OR *read rather than tell.* **It is better to read well than to tell badly.** Whether reading or telling, for best results prepare the story as fully as possible. Spontaneity comes from feeling at home with your material.

3. Enjoy sharing your story. Make sure the children are as comfortable and relaxed as possible. Carpets, cushions and bean-bags are ideal for all ages. Sit in comfortable relationship to your group. Try to maintain easy eye contact, especially with groups which are new to you.

Eye contact helps to ensure better listening.

• If your stories are well-chosen, well-prepared and shared for pleasure, you are unlikely to have behaviour problems during story time and you will have better relationships in between.

SOME SUBSIDIARY RULES

4. Be prepared to be flexible. If the class groans when you announce your story for the day, make sure you have another one in reserve. If your repertoire is small, this can be a story kept for *reading* aloud. A relief teacher may have shared the one you had in mind or the class may know it well from previous years. However, usually children will be only too pleased to hear a good story again and again.

5. Be prepared to act the fool. Ham a story up if it requires that or the occasion dictates. And don't mind if you look unintentionally foolish. Sooner or later, every storyteller makes a mistake or forgets something. *It does not matter* (provided it does not become a habit!).

• One of the most important things we can do for children is to share our humanity — in its comic as well as its tragic aspects — and if we cannot laugh at ourselves or accept being the cause of others' laughing, we diminish rather than strengthen our "image" and role. True dignity is not harmed by shared laughter.

6. Be prepared for the unexpected. Stories often bring a much wider range of responses than teachers expect. If you are open to your group, you will find many ways to extend the story experience. Don't have fixed ideas beforehand about how children are going to react to the story and what you are going to do. Have several ideas in mind and keep your eyes and ears open for the children's reactions and comments.

• Stories, well chosen, communicate so directly with children that they will often drop barriers and talk far more freely than at any other time. Or they will confide things from their life and their dreams. Be open to them and be gentle; when our barriers are down we don't always want to be taken up too quickly or too strongly.

• Know as much as you can discover about the story, its near relations, where it comes from, how it fits in the story traditions of the people who passed it on. This kind of knowledge can help you extend the story and extend the children's awareness of others.

• Try to be aware of links between stories and poems or stories and novels that the children may know or that they would enjoy reading.

7. Never forget that enjoyment should be your first and chief consideration. Share stories for pleasure and without asking for dissection, analysis, regurgitation or any other formal response. The best stories will often leave everyone quiet and private and wanting to stay that way. A spoken response may come weeks, months, or even years later.

STORYTELLING IN A VISUAL AGE

• Storytelling speaks to the inner ear and encourages visual imagination — something many of today's children have never learnt to develop.

• It may take patience to introduce storytelling to a television generation — but you will be surprised how quickly a regular program of storytelling will bring its reward, with children looking forward to, and demanding, their next story.

• Use stories in which things *happen* — plenty of action uncluttered by descriptive words and phrases. Description confines by dictating what we should see and understand; the bare bones of a story allow us to form our *own* pictures and fit the story to our own experience.

• The pictures forming in the minds of the children may be very different from those in your own mind; this does not matter.

• Children enjoy illustrating the stories they have heard; their drawings and paintings can tell us much about their understanding and response. For a satisfying and creative variation on this, ask them to illustrate *while* you are telling. Try it yourself while listening to a story or news item on the radio. It is not a distraction but rather fixes the story in the mind.

USING MUSIC

• Music soothes the savage breast. If you have a guitar, play a peaceful tune to settle the children or use a song appropriate to the story you are about to tell or have just told.

• Use suitable tapes and records (e.g. Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel,* Stravinsky's *Firebird,* Rossini's *William Tell)* to introduce particular stories, if appropriate.

• There are songs available from most of the indigenous peoples of the world to accompany their folk tales. Songs and stories can complement each other and give deeper insight into those who have created and loved them.

. . . play a peaceful tune . . .

SELECTING STORIES

1. Look for stories that you like and that are likely to suit, and be enjoyed by, the children with whom you work.
2. Look for stories that flow well, with a strong sequential narrative and without superfluous description.
3. Where there are various retellings of the same story, compare them and select the one that sounds best when you try it out loud.
4. If necessary, edit a story to give it greater strength, e.g. by omitting unnecessary incidents and descriptions and simplifying the syntax if it is too complex.
5. The story you choose must be *worth* learning and *worth* sharing — but remember that shared pleasure or laughter are valuable in themselves. There is no need to look beyond the reward of mutual enjoyment.
6. While folk tales lend themselves to, and are meant for, telling, if *you* do not like them then look for other kinds of stories.

STORY SUGGESTIONS FOR VARIOUS AGES

Ages are only an approximate guide as to what to use with children. Children accustomed to stories will enjoy a wide range; others need to be gradually extended. With infant classes which have had little in the way of oral story experiences, use the folk tales that have stood the test of generations of listeners; with older classes, the "yarn" may offer the best road in.

Birth to 3 years. Songs, rhymes, chants, finger-play rhymes, cumulative stories such as Joseph Jacobs' *The cat and the mouse played in the malt house,* John Burningham's *Mr Gumpy's Outing,* and *This is the house that Jack built (Mother Goose Treasury).* Sing, say or chant stories and rhymes as you play with, bath or nurse young children.

3-6 years. As above, plus other simple stories such as ones in *The Fairy Tale Treasury* (Haviland and Briggs). *The Three Bears, The Three Pigs* and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff, Johnny Cake* or *The Gingerbread Man, Millions of Cats* (Wanda Gag) are all easy to learn and fun to share. Encourage the children to join in with rhymes and repetitive phrases.

6-8 years. As above, plus an extended range of folk tales. This is the ideal age for *Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk* and similar stories. Use Wanda Gag's *Tales from Grimm* and *More Tales from Grimm;* both include the "less-grim" stories in good flowing retellings. Make sure they meet old favourites such as *The Five Chinese Brothers* (Bishop), *The Fat Cat* (Kent), *Gone is Gone* (Wanda Gag), *The Princess of Tomboso* (Newfeld) and *Tikki Tikki Tembo* (Mosel). Although in picture book format, these stories are more fun if *told* first; you can then explore the illustrations with the class or leave them to do so in groups or alone.

• Introduce them to *The Thirsty Sand Frog (Djgurba)* and *Kwork Kwork* (in *Kwork Kwork)* and other suitable Aboriginal stories.

8-10 years. A good age to really explore the range of folk tales from all over the world, omitting only the ones suited to younger listeners and those requiring some maturity. Often they will ask for a repeat of a story first heard when they were in a younger class: stories such as *Epaminondas, The Five Chinese Brothers, Tikki Tikki Tembo* and *Stan Bolovan.* If they have not met it, be sure to introduce *Jim and the Beanstalk* (Briggs). Use the Dick Roughsey/Percy Trezise stories (e.g. *The Rainbow Serpent)* and find other Aboriginal stories that you can share.

11-12 years. Extend the range further. There are folk tales from various collections that are better used at this stage: *Mr Fox, Yallery Brown* and *The Pottle of Brains* (all from Joseph Jacobs, *English Fairy Tales), Conall Yellowclaw* (Manning-Sanders, *A Book of Giants)* and *Ulysses and the Cyclops.*

• Introduce some of the stories from North America about Sedna, about how horses came to the Indians and about the ghosts and spirits that haunt the fog-bound fiords and forests of the Pacific coast.

• Many of the Japanese stories are best kept for this age, as younger children have difficulty in accepting the open endings of some of them. There are also many stories from Africa with open endings and ones where the listeners are asked to decide what *should* happen.

12 plus. More sophisticated jokes, yarns and stories should be kept for these years — stories that require a mature sense of humour, such as Dal Stivens' yarns, and those that are macabre and strange, such as *Gobbleknoll* and *Hoichi the Earless* (Garner, *A Book of Goblins). The Monkey's Paw* by W. W. Jacobs, which is in various collections of short stories, can be a certain way to capture a doubting or self-conscious group of older children. *The Yellow Ribbon* (Tashjian), fully embroidered, is good for an older group. Once you have "caught" them, it is possible to use almost any story.

Any age. Many stories can be used with almost any age; the youngest may not understand the meaning but will be caught and held by the music of the words — often their understanding will be greater than we realise. In any case, "What the heart knows first, the head will know after" and we should aim to stretch them rather than always work within their supposed limits. *A Story, a Story* (Haley) is an Ashanti story that works at many levels. Another is *Aukam* in Lawrie's *Myths and Legends of Torres Strait.*

N.B.

• The suggestions given are only a small number of the ones that could be mentioned. They may not work for you. Each person has to look for the stories that best suit. The list can be extended by reading through any collections of folk tales, myths, legends, yarns; by watching for stories in newspapers and magazines and over the radio and TV; and by sharing stories with friends.

• If you hear a good story, go over it in your mind immediately after hearing it; go over it again that night, and share it as soon as possible. Many a good yarn can be added to your repertoire in this way. If it is a folk tale or short story that needs more preparation, get the details of the publication and request it from your library.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RECOMMENDED STORY COLLECTIONS

NOTE

- The symbol **(A)** indicates stories suitable for infants and/or lower primary classes and, in some cases, pre-school or younger.
- The symbol **(B)** indicates stories for upper-primary and secondary.
- The symbol **(AB)** indicates stories for all ages.
- Classification is broad and does *not* mean that stories from **(A)** collections cannot be shared with older children or that **(B)** collections contain no stories for the younger ones; the group and the occasion should determine your choice.

ANDERSEN, H. C. **Fairy tales,** *ed.* by Svend Larsen, *trans.* by R. P. Kewigwin. Edmund Ward, Vols. I-III, 1951-1958. There are many other collections but not all of the retellings are suitable for oral presentation. Individual stories can be found in numerous anthologies and in picture-story book format. **(AB)**

AFANASEV, A. **Russian fairy tales,** *trans.* by Norbert Guterman. Pantheon Books, 1945. Again available in various other collections, while some appear in individual picture-story book editions. **(AB)**

ASBJORNSEN, P. C. and J. MOE. **Norwegian folk tales,** *trans.* by P. S. Iversen and C. Norman. Allen & Unwin, 1963. Also many other collections drawn from stories recorded by Asbjornsen and Moe. Some picture-story book versions of individual stories. **(AB)**

AUBREY, I. **Storyteller's encore; more Canadian stories to tell to children.** Ottawa, Canadian Library Association, 1984.

BELTING, N. **King Solomon's cat — folk tales from around the world.** Rapp & Whiting. **(A)**

BOWMAN, J. C. and M. BIANCO. **Tales from a Finnish fireside.** Chatto & Windus, 1975. Originally published as *Tales from a Finnish tupa,* 1936. **(AB)**

BRIGGS, K. **British folk tales and legends; a sampler.** Routledge & Kegan Paul/Paladin, 1977. Also other titles by Katharine Briggs. Good for background information as well as for stories. **(AB)**

BRIGGS, K. and R. TONGUE. **Folktales of England.** *(Folktales of the World* series) University of Chicago Press, 1965. A good representative collection of English material. **(B)**

BRIGGS, R. and V. HAVILAND. **The fairy tale treasury.** Hamish Hamilton, 1972. (Puffin) A basic collection for anyone working with younger children. **(AB)**

CHAMBERS, A. **Funny folk; a book of comic tales.** Heinemann, 1976. Useful yarns and some longer stories. **(B)**

CHILDS, I. **The badger wood and other tales.** Hutchinson, 1977. Stories from Japan. **(B)**

CLARK, E. E. **Indian legends of Canada.** McClelland & Stewart, 1961. Canadian material is not always easy to get. There is an increase in the number of small collections now being published of Indian and Inuit (Eskimo) material. Check *Canadian Books for Young People, ed.* by Irma McDonough, University of Toronto Press. **(B)**

COLWELL, E. **Tales from the islands** (Great Britain). Kestrel, 1975. Numerous other titles by Colwell cover all ages. **(AB)**

COURLANDER, H. and G. HERZOG. **The cow-tail switch and other West African stories.** Henry Holt & Company, 1947. Also other collections of African stories by Courlander, Appiah etc. **(B)**

CROSSLEY-HOLLAND, K. **The Faber book of Northern Legends.** Faber, 1977. **)B)**

DJUGURBA. **Tales from the spirit time,** and **KWORK KWORK; The green frog and other tales from the spirit time.** Australian National University Press, 1975 and 1977. **(A)**

DORSON, R. M. **Folk legends from Japan.** Tuttle, 1962. **(B)**

DOWNING, C. **Tales of the Hodja.** Oxford University Press, 1964. Also **Armenian folk tales and fables,** Oxford, 1972. **(B)**

FARMER, P. **Beginnings: creation myths of the world.** Chatto & Windus, 1978. Also **When the morning stars sang together,** by John S. Morgan, Book Society of Canada Limited, 1974. **(B)**

GARNER, Alan. **The Guizer; a book of fools.** Hamish Hamilton, 1975. Also **A book of Goblins.** Puffin, 1972. **(B)**

GRIMM, J. & W. **The complete Grimm's fairy tales.** Pantheon Books, 1944. Numerous other collections. Use the Wanda Gag retellings for younger children. Individual titles in other anthologies and in picture book versions. **(AB)**

ISAACS, J. **Australian Dreaming; 40,000 years of Aboriginal history.** Lansdowne Press, 1980. Source book and background information. **(B)**

JABLOW, A., & C. WITHERS. **The man in the moon: sky tales from many lands.** Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969. **(AB)**

JACOBS, J. **English fairy tales.** Bodley Head, 1968. Various other titles by Joseph Jacobs. Many picture story versions of his tales are available. **(AB)**

JAGENDORFF, M. A. and R. S. BOGGS. **The king of the mountains; a treasury of Latin American folk tales.** Vanguard, 1960. **(B)**

KEELY, H. H. **The city of the dagger, and other tales from Burma.** Warne, 1972. **(B)**

KEIGHTLEY, T. **The world guide to gnomes, fairies, elves and other little people.** Avenel Books, 1978. Originally published as **The fairy mythology,** 1880. Excellent for background information on various folk creatures from different parts of Europe. **(B)**

KIPLING, R. **Just so stories.** Macmillan, 1902. **(A)**

KOHNKE, G. **Time belong Tumbuna; legends and traditions of Papua New Guinea.** Robert Brown & Associates, 1973. **(B)**

LANG, A. **The blue fairy book** (1899). Longmans Green, 1949. Also other titles. **(AB)**

LAWRIE, M. **Tales from Torres Strait.** Queensland University press, 1970. **(A)**

LITTLEDAY, F. **Ghosts and spirits of many lands.** Doubleday, 1970. Also **Strange tales from many lands,** 1975. **(B)**

MANNING-SANDERS, R. **A choice of magic.** Methuen, 1971. Many other useful titles, e.g. **A book of giants. (AB)**

MATTERSON, E. **This little Puffin; finger plays and nursery games.** Puffin, 1969. Invaluable for parents and infants' teachers. **(A)**

MONTGOMERIE, Norah. **To read and to tell; an anthology of stories for children.** Bodley head, 1962. Also **More stories to read and to tell.** 1971. **(AB)**

MONTGOMERIE, N. & M. **The well at the world's end; folk tales of Scotland.** Bodley Head, 1975. Also Ruth Manning-Sanders, **Scottish folk tales.** Methuen, 1976. **(AB)**

Mother Goose Treasury, illus. Raymond Briggs. Hamish Hamilton & Puffin. And many other collections of nursery rhymes. This is one of the most comprehensive and attractive. **(A)**

NANGAN, J. **Joe Mangan's Dreaming; Aboriginal legends of the North-West.** Nelson, 1976. **(B)**

O'FAOLAIN, E. **Children of the salmon, and other Irish folk-tales.** Longmans, 1965. **(B)**

ROBINSON, R. **Aboriginal myths and legends.** Sun Books, 1966. Also **The man who sold his Dreaming.** Rigby, 1977. **(B)**

RUGOFF, M. **The Penguin book of world folk tales.** Penguin, 1977. **(B)**

SCOTT, W. (Bill) N. **Complete book of Australian folk lore.** Summit Books (Hamlyn), 1979. Also other collections of Australian folk-lore by Bill Wannan, Hugh Edwards. **(B)**

TASHJIAN, V. A. **Juba this and juba that; story hour stretches for large or small groups.** Little Brown, 1969. An essential source book for the classroom teacher-storyteller. **(AB)**

WITHERS, Carl. **I saw a rocket walk a mile; nonsense tales, chants and songs from many lands. (AB)**

WALKER, Kath. **Stradbroke Dreamtime.** Angus & Robertson, 1972. Childhood stories remembered by the well known Aboriginal poet. **(AB)**

N.B.
This is only a selection from the many excellent collections available. Look at any that come your way; try, out loud, any stories that appeal to you; learn those that you would enjoy sharing. Make your own collection of stories either in a folder or on tapes so that they are readily available whenever you want to learn or revise a story.

LEARNING A STORY

In time you will develop your own preferred method. The following suggestions work well for some storytellers.

1. Use a tape-recorder to try out any new stories. When you find a story you like, record it, reading it as you think you might tell it. This often shows up faults in the text — awkward phrases, weak words that can be replaced by more forceful ones, lack of flow and, perhaps, errors in the story or failure to adequately resolve or tie up some incident.

• When you have listened a few times you will probably want to re-record. This process may be repeated. By the time the story seems right on tape you will probably find that you already know it and are ready to tell it.

• The advantages of tape-recording are that you can listen critically to the story *and* to your voice. It is also convenient because you can listen while doing other tasks, e.g. while driving home.

2. Try writing the story out in full. Make a summary of the plot. Consider the characters — what is said about them and how much they reveal about themselves in what they say and do.

3. Some people like to learn a story in sections before considering it as a whole.

4. For some, the visual approach works best, and they prefer to think through the story as though it were a film running through their mind.

• Whichever process you use, be sure to try it out loud *before* you share it for the first time.

• In general, it is preferable to try new stories on a group with whom you feel at ease.

TELLING THE STORY

• You have found a good story that the children will almost certainly enjoy. You have learnt it and feel at ease with it. You and the children are all seated comfortably. The time has come to tell it. Take a deep breath, look inward to your own "story picture", and begin: "Once upon a time (pause) there was a man called Stan Bolovan (pause) . . ."

• The pause is the storyteller's most useful technique. Only you can judge how long it should be at any particular time. Use it carefully, remembering that it is the pause which invites the listener into the story. It is the pause which gives time for anticipation and, in a good story, anticipation may be followed by the grin of those who can guess what happens next — or the gasp of those meeting the unexpected.

• Learn to use your voice flexibly so that it reflects the changing needs of the characters or the changing pace of the story.

• Do not use too much body movement or gesture — these are more often a distraction than a natural part of story sharing.

• First and last, remember that pleasure is the aim.

• If you are nervous, learn your opening thoroughly and remind yourself that you are only the channel through which the story should flow. Put the story in the forefront and forget yourself.

• Be fully aware of the children's responses. You will learn more from them than when practising on your own.

• Make sure you tell the children where the story originated and where it can be found, and perhaps something about the tradition, country and culture to which it belongs.

PICTURE-STORY BOOKS

When using picture-story books with children, look for a good story. This may be very brief, as in Pat Hutchins, *Rosie's Walk* or longer as in M. Flack, *The Story about Ping*. It may be told partly through words and partly through pictures, as in *Rosie's Walk*, or told in words which are complemented and extended by the illustration as in J. Wagner and R. Brooks, *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat*.

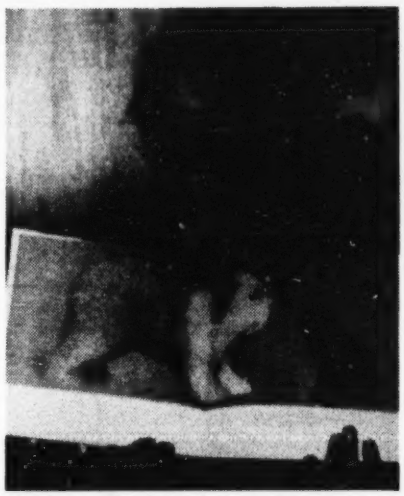
Illustrations should be clear and attractive. Children respond to a wide range of styles. They enjoy the clean bright colours of *The Story About Ping* and Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, but they also like the more sombre illustrations of *John Brown . . .* and the gentle colours in the two stories about *Mr Gumpy* by John Burningham. *Millions of Cats* by Wanda Gag is in black and white but many who heard it when young are sure it was full of colour — a delightful story has added its own colour in their imaginations.

Try the story out loud. Does it flow easily? Four stories which are a pleasure to read out loud and which appeal widely are *Mr Gumpy's Outing, Mr Gumpy's Motor Car, John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat* and Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are.*

A good picture-story book can be shared again and again without becoming boring. It appeals to all ages. It will be enjoyed by children of limited ability and by the brightest.

Do not use picture-story books with sight-handicapped children unless the story can stand alone. They can share the pictures in small groups or individually if they have partial sight. If using them with deaf or partially-deaf children, give time for them to lip read the story and then look at the illustrations before you turn the page. Children without handicaps can listen and look at the same time.

It is preferable to know your story. Hold the book in front where you can have full control and can turn pages without distracting attention from the story. Tell the story while showing the relevant pictures.



The best way to hold a picture-story for sharing.

AIDS TO STORYTELLING

Some people like to have some kind of physical object to act as a focus, or to introduce each story and/or to have a small ceremony to open or close a story session. The latter in unnecessary in the classroom, except for very special occasions; it adds a note of formality that might prevent you from treating stories as a natural and essential part of each day.

If using story objects or aids, such as a story apron, story cloth or story basket, make sure you are using them to lead into the story and not as gimmicks to excuse poor storytelling or as barriers to hide yourself from the class.

As considered later, anything can lead to a story. However, some storytellers use a selection of toys and other items about which to weave a story or to allow a child to select one which then leads to a particular story.

Do not think you must use something of this nature. Ideally, you should be able to tell stories anywhere, at any time and with nothing but your voice to carry the tale.

STRING STORIES

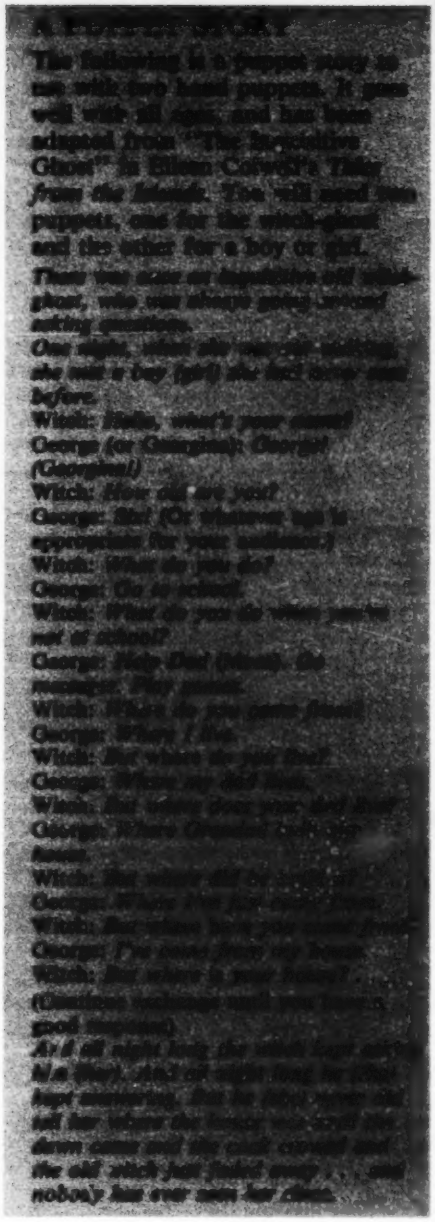
Telling stories while deftly manipulating string to form "pictures" is something which always fascinates audiences. Practise well in private before trying your skills in public. There are various books on the subject; the simplest and easiest to follow is Camilla Gryski's *Cat's Cradle, Owl's Eyes; a book of string games* (Toronto, Kids Can Press, 1983).

Remember, if kids can, so can you; but it may take *you* a bit longer! When you have mastered the basics, you can use your skills to astonish and delight students and awaken envy in less talented colleagues.

PUPPETS

Hand and finger puppets can be useful aids in storytelling, particularly with young and/or disadvantaged children.

- **All children are fascinated by puppets.**
- **They help to focus attention and are particularly useful with children who have never heard stories other than in the form of picture books or illustrated stories.**
- **They can be used to engage children in conversation before, between and after stories. Some children talk more freely to and through a puppet.**
- **They can lead on to, or arise from, the actual making of puppets in the classroom.**
- **Never try to use more than two puppets at a time, if using hand puppets with storytelling. Usually it is best to have just one, e.g. a witch or a giant.**
- **Do not have exaggerated features for your puppets. It limits their use and may distract attention rather than helping to focus it.**
- **Do not try to be a ventriloquist. Use the puppet as part of your storytelling and not as a performing doll.**
- **Make your own puppets if at all possible. However crudely made, they will be more individual, more a part of *your* presentation.**
- **With small children, use finger puppets to accompany various story rhymes, e.g. a mouse is easy to make and can be effectively used with many nursery rhymes.**



The Gingerbread Man
Use yellow, brown or red felt to make this simple Gingerbread Man or Johnny Cake.
Make a rough sketch that will allow plenty of room for your hand.
Cut out a paper pattern.
Cut two pieces of felt from pattern.
Embroider with brown for eyes, nostrils and buttons. (Currants)
Use yellow for the mouth. (Lemon peel)
Put a little stuffing behind the face and attach invisibly.
Stitch two sides together using glove stitch.

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STORIES FROM YOUR OWN LIFE

Kids have to find that each of us has a value and a worth. You have to dream out loud and tell your story. Tell a story that is playful, but one that will help a child, or an adult, to discover his own particular self. His unique butterfly. **Brother Blue,** American storyteller.

- Tell about things that happen to you; places you have been to, things you have seen. Not to the exclusion of other stories — too much of "When I . . ." can be boring and off-putting. But we all need to learn to "story" our own lives (it is the best way to come to terms with what we are and how we got there) and children will do this more readily in response to those who are not afraid to share something of themselves.
- Help them to discover how to "story" their lives through talking, writing, painting, drawing, acting. Show them how to shape a story to give it strength; how to create suspense and sustain interest by building to a climax; how to select words that are precise and concrete. Children tend to string their stories together with "and then . . ." (like the adult speaker who uses "and errr . . ."). Show them how to avoid this while retaining the directness of simple sentence structures.
- Use stories relating to your local area and its past. Get children to ask parents and others about things that have happened and collect together any yarns and legends.
- Bring along an old photo of yourself and tell children the story behind it, e.g. your first day at school, the first fish you ever caught, the day you lost the big race or had your front teeth knocked out. A photo is a useful symbol which recalls a day or event for those who know the story. Collect some old photos and build a story about what lies behind one or a series of these.
- Show a souvenir from your holidays and tell children about it: where it was bought or found, what it is, how it is used or what it symbolises. Song sticks from Darwin, a shadow puppet from Bali, a shell from Port Davey — everything has a story.
- Use collage to "story" a class excursion, e.g. leaves, bus tickets, the bit of denim from Jim's pants that tore off on the barbed wire, drawings, written comments etc.
- Share Robin Klein's brilliantly written *Penny Pollard's diary* (O.U.P., 1983) and Farley Mowat's *Owls in the family* (1961).
- Invite other children, teachers, people from the community (e.g. elderly citizens) to come and share the story of things that have happened to them.

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING

1. BOOKS/ARTICLES

A short list of books about storytelling and material of interest to storytellers:

ALWIN, Tony. "Using myths and legends in school" in *Children's Literature in Education* 12(2), 1981, pp. 80-90.

BAKER, Augusta. *Storytelling* art and technique, Bowker, 1977. An enjoyable and practical guide.

BETTELHEIM, Bruno. *The uses of enchantment*; the meaning and importance of fairy tales. Knopf, 1976. (Penguin).

COLWELL, Eileen. *Storytelling*. Bodley Head, 1980. Advice from an experienced storyteller.

COOK, Elizabeth. *The ordinary and the fabulous*; an introduction to myths, legends and fairy tales for teachers and storytellers. Cambridge University press, 1969. Good on myths and legends; less helpful on fairy tales.

HUGHES, Ted. "Myth and Education" in *Children's Literature in Education*, 1, March 1970.

LUTHI, Max. *Once upon a time*; on the nature of fairy tales. Methuen Usage, 1970.

PELLOWSKI, Anne. *The world of storytelling*. Bowker, 1977. A look at the storytellers of the world, by one who has travelled widely, collecting and telling stories.

SAWYER, Ruth. *The way of the storyteller*. Bodley Head. Perhaps no other writer captures so well the joy of sharing stories.

SCOTT, Patricia. *Sharing stories*; storytelling and reading aloud. Storytellers Press. A brief introduction.

2. CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Able to order: Stories and the young reader. Papers presented at the 1977 Conference on Children's Literature, Sydney, 1978, edited by Mary Nan Winch, Sydney, 1977. Australian Publishers, 1978. Six papers by M. Meek, J. Fox, and the members of their team, and A. Dale, "Storytelling for a reading culture".

Through fantasy to reality. Papers presented at the 1977 Conference on Children's Literature, Sydney, 1978, edited by Maurice Saxby. Hicks Smith, 1977. Australian Publishers, 1978.

All papers of interest, most should be able to be ordered.

A [illegible] Papers presented at the 1979 Conference on Children's Literature, Sydney, 1979, edited by Maurice Saxby. Hicks Smith, 1977. Australian Publishers, 1978.

Child language, teaching and literature. Papers presented at the 1979 Conference on Child Language, Sydney, 1979, edited by Maurice Saxby. Hicks Smith, 1977. Australian Publishers, 1978.

Language and literature for the eighties. Papers presented at the 1980 Conference on Children's Literature, Sydney, 1980, edited by Maurice Saxby. Hicks Smith, 1977. Australian Publishers, 1978.

"Reading and writing". Papers presented at the 1981 Conference on Children's Literature, Sydney, 1981, edited by Maurice Saxby. Hicks Smith, 1977. Australian Publishers, 1978.

Children, books and reading. Papers presented at the 1982 Conference on Children's Literature, Sydney, 1982, edited by Maurice Saxby. Hicks Smith, 1977. Australian Publishers, 1978.

STORYTELLING GUILDS

There are Storytelling Guilds in all major Australian centres. They have been formed to support and encourage storytellers throughout the community.

Inquire about Guilds through your local library. If unable to locate such a group, send a stamped addressed envelope to Patricia Scott, P.O. Box 61, Oatlands, Tasmania 7120, stating that you would like information on joining (or forming) such a group.

Or just arrange to meet with a couple of friends and exchange stories over a cup of coffee or a glass of wine. The pleasure is mutual.

Patricia Scott

P.E.N. 49 was written by **Patricia Scott,** a well-known storyteller, lecturer and consultant on children's literature. She has worked in schools in most parts of Australia, run workshops for teachers and others, and lectured widely in Universities and C.A.E.s. She lives at Oatlands, Tasmania.

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